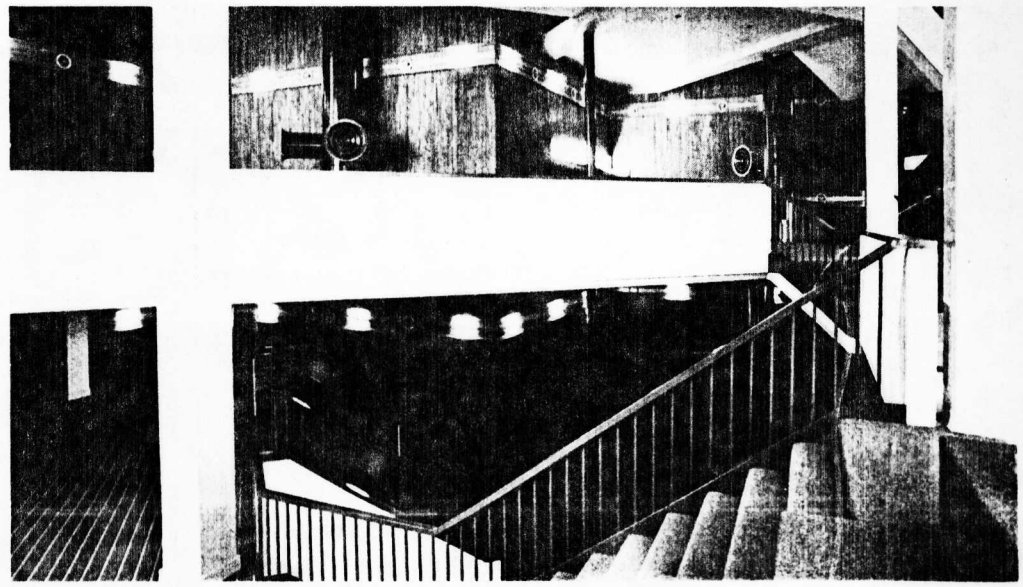

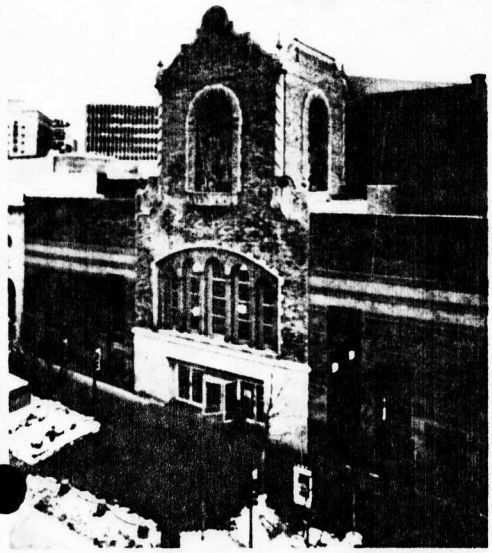

Photo above: *MCC's exterior (State St. facade) combines elements of the past and present.*
Photo above right: *The Crossroads is functional, adapting for use as a lobby for the theatres, a background for art displays, an informal performing area and space for social activities.*

Hello Madison Civic Center

Through the revolving doors, at 211 State Street, you'll encounter Madison's new cultural arts center. It's the rising star on the horizon and the newest meeting and entertainment hotspot in the Midwest. You've just entered the **Madison Civic Center.**

As you walk through it, one can see that two original State St. structures, the 50-year old Capitol Theater — once a vaudeville house and theatre — and the abutting building, formerly the Montgomery Ward's department store, are woven into a multi-purpose home for the Madison arts.

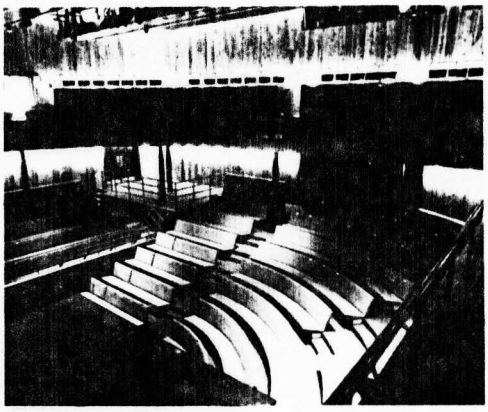

Photo above: *The Isthmus Playhouse is an intimate theater with a challenging thrust stage surrounded on three sides by bench style seating. A balcony of seats rises above.*
Photo left: *In an effort to capture the atmosphere of the old Capitol Theater, the Oscar Mayer Theater's plaster walls, ceilings and balcony surfaces were painted and stenciled to evoke the mood of the "Art Deco" period.*

"In the architecture, the elements of the past have been carefully blended with today's more contemporary realities of design, color and texture," said Ed Neiss, director of the MCC. The architects called this eclectic architectural design, "interpretive restoration", he explained.

Open since February 24, the Madison Civic Center has attracted over 125,000 visitors through its doors. And already one half million dollars in sales has marked its ledger, according to Neiss.

"This influx of people to our central city area demonstrates a big shot in the arm for the revitalization of Madison's downtown area," Neiss said. "We've found already that we have an impact beyond the City of Madison. A regional appeal is there, its growing, and its a tremendous market yet to be siphoned."

The civic center's two theatres, spacious crossroads, reception rooms, gallery and workshop space for the Madison Art Center represent a boost to hospitality.

"The 2,200-seat Oscar Mayer Theater can accommodate a wide variety of activities in a setting that emanates much of the atmosphere and decorative features of the old Capitol Theater," said Diane Clark, MCC's promotion director. "We're booking the theatre now for broadway shows, conventions, nationally-recognized entertainers, major music groups and much more."

"The 370-seat Isthmus Playhouse on the other hand," she described, "is a versatile theater, wholly of new

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construction with state of the art lighting and sound equipment."

"Carpeted bench-style seats rise around a thrust stage that's fully drapped."

"In response to meeting needs, the theatres offer multi-seat and stage utility and/or an entertainment

haven, providing middle-of-the-road shows," she explained.

Throughout the civic center, is a multi-level diagonal walkway, called the "Crossroads". Its purpose is both decorative and functional. At one point, it takes you right to the doors of the 9,000 square foot main gallery of the Madison Art Center. The art center's other exhibit space, on three other levels, display over 2,500 works of art.

"No matter what, we intend to be a readily accessible cultural center," said Clark. "One where you just can't miss what's happening."

To find out more information about the Madison Civic Center's meeting facilities, contact the convention bureau office at 255-0701. MCC's event information also runs daily on the Madison Telefun Line at 256-6222.